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OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

S/P

Office Memorandum

TO : S/P - Mr. Ferguson

FROM : S/P - Mr. Halle

DATE: December 29, 1952

SUBJECT: Latin American Policy Statement

It may be useful for me to set down here certain considerations and recommendations that I think might be dealt with in any formulation of our foreign policy in Latin America:

1. Any introductory description of the factual situation in Latin America should, I think, include its generally unfortunate geography. I think this may be especially important in order to obviate romantic notions, which have been widely prevalent, of the possibilities that the area contains for an abundant life. I believe that it is, in fact, the poorest continental area in the world with respect to the chances of developing a high and populous civilization. In North America, all our agriculture is conducted on the level plains between mountain ranges. We do not expect more-or-less steep mountain slopes to support an agricultural population. The same statement could, I think, be made for every other part of the world except Latin America. In Latin America, which is made up of states that are predominantly agricultural in their economies, the population is concentrated along the mountain slopes while the lowland plains remain relatively vacant. This is not because the mountain slopes are better suited to agriculture in Latin America than elsewhere. It is because, in tropical America the lowland plains are even worse than the mountains. All this suggests that, especially with the steady increase in population, Latin America could develop into a sort of "pauper area".

2. To my mind, a striking feature of Latin America's human geography is the isolation of the urban centers from the agricultural countryside on which they depend for their support. The ruling classes of Latin America are not only city dwellers, they are by-and-large the most urban-minded people in the world. It is typical that the wealthy classes in the average Latin American capital, although they may be completely at home in Paris, New York, and Los Angeles,

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tend to be completely unfamiliar with their own countrysides, lack curiosity about them, and are disdainful of them. They feel themselves too urbane and sophisticated for rural matters. It may be that one can better understand many features of Latin America's social and political structures by this lack of association between the urban ruling classes and the supporting countryside.

3. In the past, the Latin American policy of the United States has often been tacitly regarded as something that bears little relationship to the policy of the United States in other areas or to its general foreign policy. There are historic reasons for this that, with the passage of time and change of circumstances, have lost their validity. The foreign policy of the United States today has necessarily resolved itself, almost entirely, into a strategy for carrying on our struggle with the Soviet Union. Latin American policy should therefore be approached in terms of the position of Latin America in our strategy.

4. From 1933 until World War II, we generally described the objective of our Latin American policy by the words "hemisphere security". In this last stage of our "isolationism", we thought of the defense of the hemisphere as something to be achieved, essentially, along the beaches of the hemisphere. One recalls how, in 1939, when war broke out in Europe, the American states, under our leadership, drew an offshore line around the hemisphere and gave notice to the rest of the world that the war was not to cross that line. With the passing of our isolationism in World War II, we adopted a radically different concept of our own security and the security of the hemisphere. What we did, in effect, was to move the front lines of our hemisphere defenses from the local beaches to Berlin, Vienna, Greece, the 38th Parallel in Korea, and other points around the Soviet area. Although the front lines are no longer in the hemisphere, as we conceived them to be in the 1930s, our own security is still just as completely identified with the security of the hemisphere as it ever was. There is no reason, consequently, why we should not make as much use of the term "hemisphere security" today, in describing our total foreign policy to the Latin Americans, as we ever did. I rather think that the development of this approach would contribute

substantially to overcoming the false notion among the Latin Americans that what we do overseas somehow competes with the requirements of their own national interests. I doubt that we have fully exploited the valid grounds we have for claiming their active support of our policies in the rest of the world. We have not adequately taken our opportunities to identify them with our policies.

5. The only basis on which we can genuinely lay claim to the cooperation of Latin America and its acceptance of our leadership is that our policy is not a narrowly self-serving policy, but one that embraces, protects, and ministers to their own interests. This does not mean telling them that they must understand that we have superior responsibilities in the world in which they do not share. It means, rather, telling them that they do share our responsibilities in the world.

6. Our main problem is that of exercising the political leadership of the hemisphere, and it does not differ essentially from the problem of political leadership in any democratic environment. We have to regard the twenty Latin American states, in many respects, as our constituency. Our leadership must be based on their consent to it rather than on their intimidation or their fatalistic acceptance of it. This does not mean that we must base our policy in the world on a "Gallup Poll" of the Latin American states. It does mean that we should give them a sense of participation with us in our responsibilities by keeping their governments informed and by giving them opportunities to express their views. I think the problem here is quite similar to the U.K.'s problem with the British Dominions. As I understand it, London maintains a stream of information messages to the Dominion Governments, on which the Dominion Governments are free to base and to express their views to London, and London also calls them into consultation occasionally on questions of British policy. We have, I think, got into a vicious circle in our dealings with the Latin Americans since the war. Our preoccupation with other areas has aroused in them a feeling that we consider them unimportant and are not disposed to waste our attention on them. They have had the normal reaction to this feeling, which is occasionally to make themselves important in our eyes and force us to give them our

attention by attacking us in some way or other and acting irresponsibly. This makes matters worse, because their irresponsible action prompts us to take the view that we cannot risk our foreign policy and the conduct of our foreign relations by consulting such irresponsible governments with respect to it. I am sure that, on the other hand, if we did make them feel that they were on our team and in our confidence, we should find that feeling reflected in more sober and responsible behavior on their part. In fact, I think we should find them rather generally disposed to accept our decisions on world policy and to cooperate in carrying them out, if they had this feeling of being at our side. I think the outstanding achievement of the Good Neighbor Policy was, precisely, in the degree to which Sumner Welles, by his consummate diplomacy, managed to give them this feeling. I think, moreover, that the historical record would show how they consequently grew in their sense of responsibility.

7. I think it would be advantageous to give a good deal of careful consideration to the development of machinery or procedures for keeping the Latin Americans informed and for enabling them to express to us their views on world problems with respect to which so much of the responsibility for decision rests on us. I do not have in mind so much the formal and cumbersome machinery of international conferences, of which there is undoubtedly enough on the inter-American landscape already. I am also somewhat leery of pro-forma but rather empty and hypocritical devices for consultation, such as we have occasionally used in the past. I am thinking of the device of calling all the Latin American Ambassadors to a meeting, at which we read a formal announcement, whereupon we send them home again. This gives no Ambassador any sense of personally being "in"--and, of course, it does nothing like that for the Foreign Ministers and other principal officials in the home government. The psychological purpose is not served unless the Latin officials can feel a sense of personal identification with our officials and their worries. It is, without question, dangerous to consult where we do not mean to allow ourselves to be influenced by the results of the consultation. I think we could, however, succeed very well on the basis of the concept that we must expect that our decisions on most matters would be respected--certainly this is a test of confidence in any political leadership--but that there would be occasional instances in which a strong and united Latin American feeling would properly cause us to adjust our own views. I repeat, the purpose is not to decrease our freedom

of action in international affairs by further complicating the processes of reaching decisions in the context of a great coalition. The purpose is rather to increase our freedom of action by diminishing obstruction and increasing the consent to our leadership.

3. There should be a thorough reexamination of our policy with respect to economic and technical assistance to Latin America, and its implementation. I am, myself, convinced that programs of technical assistance, especially, can make a substantially positive contribution to the development of the Latin American countries and even, if extremely well administered, to their regard for us. I am also persuaded, however, that an objective analysis of our experience with assistance over the past decade would show that in the rather uncontrolled implementation of these programs we have often tended to achieve the opposite of our proclaimed and worthy purposes. The moral effect has, in some instances, been deplorable in that the Latin Americans have come to assume that we have a responsibility to take care of them and solve their porblems for them, which we discharge most inadequately. This has tended to make them less self-reliant, less respectful of us, and less friendly. It has in large measure become established procedure today for us to urge programs of assistance upon them and for them to accept such programs as a matter of accommodation to us. That, in their view, puts us under increased obligation to them. Moreover, some of the programs, by their economic and administrative terms, have also tended to pauperize the countries by making them dependent on our continuing assistance. I am also not persuaded that many of the programs are reducing the conditions that make for Communism rather than increasing them. I think that we are not nearly clear enough on what these programs ought to achieve, and we have not had the policy control over them that would make them safe and useful instruments of our foreign policy. It may be that all these questions go beyond the geographical limits of Latin America and should properly be taken up in a paper on "Point Four Policy". However, in the absence of such a paper, it ought to receive rather full treatment under the head of "Latin American Policy".